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Chairman: Mr. Bhattarai (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Nepal)
later: Mr. Effah-Apenteng (Chairman) ..... (Ghana)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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In the absence of Mr. Effah-Apenteng (Ghana), Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal), Vice Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 124: Pattern of conferences (*continued*) (A/56/32, A/56/120/Rev.1, A/56/133, A/56/188, A/56/213 and Corr.1, A/56/261, A/56/277, A/56/293, A/56/299, A/56/300, A/56/339 and A/56/475; A/AC.198/2001/8)

1. **Mr. Mumbey-Wafula** (Uganda) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statements made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Kenya. He attached great importance to the streamlining of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services with a view to enhancing service delivery. He noted with satisfaction that the utilization of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) had increased and that the 2000 utilization factor for the four main United Nations offices overall had exceeded the benchmark of 80 per cent. In that connection, his delegation supported the proposal for the reconfiguration of one of the large conference rooms at the United Nations conference centre in Bangkok, in order to maximize the use of the centre, and the provision of the $273,000 required for such a modification. He trusted that the efforts to increase the utilization of the conference facilities in Nairobi would be pursued and that the remaining vacancies in the Interpretation Section at UNON would be filled.

2. He expressed concern that the resources requested for the Department for the biennium 2002-2003 represented a net increase of only 2 per cent, at a time when the demand for conference services was increasing. He supported the strengthening of the Documents Control Section in order to enhance its coordination role and the processing of documentation. The late issuance of documents adversely affected the level of preparedness of delegations; there was thus a need for strict compliance with the six-week rule.

3. Like previous speakers on the item, he wished to underscore the need to adhere to the headquarters rule in order to increase the use of conference facilities at United Nations regional offices; to address the problem of excessive vacancy rates at some duty stations; and to accord equal treatment to all United Nations centres, irrespective of their location. His delegation would support every effort to that end.

4. **Mr. Elgammal** (Egypt) associated his delegation with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

5. His delegation commended the Committee on Conferences on its work and supported the recommendation in its report (A/56/32, para. 21) that the General Assembly should adopt the draft calendar of conferences and meetings for 2002-2003. His delegation also welcomed the fact that the rate of utilization of conference services had improved overall during 2000 and that the United Nations Office in Nairobi had achieved a 100 per cent utilization rate.

6. On the subject of translation, interpretation and documentation, his delegation supported the comments made in the letter from the Permanent Representative of Qatar addressed to the Secretary-General on behalf of the Arab Group (A/56/261). It also called for a reconsideration of the practice of interpretation on relay whereby statements in Arabic, for example, were interpreted into French and from French into English. His delegation had noticed that that practice adversely affected the quality of interpretation.

7. There appeared to have been an increase in the practice of self-revision in translation into Arabic. In that connection, his delegation emphasized the importance of ensuring that the use of self-revision did not impair the quality of translations and said that it was important for revisers to be highly experienced and well-trained.

8. He commended the optical disk system and called for it to be continuously developed in line with technological improvements. The system should be made available to outside users on a subscription basis.

9. His delegation wished to emphasize the importance of adhering to the six-week rule for the submission of documents, that would allow committees and other bodies ample time to study and discuss the content of those documents and reach informed decisions on them. In that connection, he agreed with the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, who had pointed out that the timely submission of documents was a shared responsibility between the Member States and the Secretariat.

10. In conclusion, his delegation drew attention to the importance of providing conference services for the regional groupings within the United Nations, the meetings of which he regarded as complementary to the official meetings of United Nations bodies. In that connection he welcomed the improvement in the provision of interpretation services to regional groupings.

11. **Mr. Senior** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of the delegations of Australia and New Zealand, said that conference services consumed a significant proportion of United Nations budgetary resources and were part of the Organization's basic machinery. It was important to have high-quality conference services in all six official languages. However, it was in the interests of delegations to ensure that spending reflected priorities and that the Organization's finite resources were used as efficiently as possible. The Department's reported overexpenditure of approximately $29 million was therefore disconcerting.

12. Translation was one area in which efficiency could be improved. Over the past 20 years, there had been quantum leaps in technology which had revolutionized work methods, yet there had not been significant gains in translation productivity over the same period; in fact, productivity had declined since the mid-1990s. That could not be attributed to staff cuts since the United Nations currently employed around 550 translators in New York and Geneva, only four fewer than 20 years earlier. He therefore welcomed the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that the General Assembly should initiate a comprehensive review of the norms and standards of productivity in the language services. The experience of other organizations should be taken into account. In that connection, he noted that the workload standards of United Nations translators appeared to be 25 per cent lower than those of their Canadian counterparts.

13. Interpreters in Geneva were handling 23 per cent fewer assignments than they had 20 years earlier. Nevertheless, individually they were handling about 89 more assignments per year than interpreters in New York. That situation, which was surely not a failing of the interpreters themselves, suggested that the Organization was not making optimum use of their valuable skills.

14. He was concerned that productivity rates for typists did not reflect the gains that might have been expected with the introduction of new technologies and that outmoded working methods, such as the use of dictaphones, had not been abandoned in favour of new approaches. He would like to know whether more could be done to reduce the cost of producing summary records and verbatim records, which increased the hourly cost of United Nations meetings by up to 68 per cent.

15. He welcomed the successful efforts to increase the use of the conference facilities in Addis Ababa, Bangkok and Nairobi. It was to be hoped that those efforts would be pursued, since utilization rates could afford to climb further still. He supported the adoption of an integrated approach to the management of conference facilities that would fully incorporate the regional commissions.

16. The increase in the provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional groupings of Member States was most welcome. The use of remote interpretation could in the future help to offset the peaks and valleys in the demand for interpretation services. He would therefore like to see further efforts to utilize remote interpretation, where practicable. He would also welcome efforts to share the workload and facilities with other organizations, including specialized agencies. The International Civil Aviation Organization in Montreal, for example, was situated in the same time zone as New York and had excellent conference facilities and interpreters for all six official languages.

17. The Department was to be commended for its successful efforts to synchronize the release of documentation. He also welcomed the re-engineering of the optical disk system (ODS) and the multilingual functionality of the new ODS. He was pleased to note that those innovations had been facilitated by the redeployment of resources as a result of the automation of other tasks. Since the United Nations web site also provided access to documents, he would like an assurance that there was no duplication of effort in that area.

18. It was regrettable that both the report of the Secretary-General on the availability of documentation for the proper functioning of intergovernmental bodies (A/56/299) and the report of the Secretary-General on submission of documentation consistent with the six-week rule (A/56/300) had themselves been late. Wider use of document planning sessions and better

coordination between author departments and processing units would no doubt bring improvements in the timely issuance of documentation, but Member States must also shoulder some of the burden: there was a need to review meeting schedules, limit requests for documentation and revise the frequency with which agenda items were discussed and their associated documents produced. In that connection, he would strongly support the biennialization of the item under consideration.

19. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) supported the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

20. His delegation attached great importance to the multilingual character of the United Nations and considered the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/56/32) to be a good basis for further work.

21. He expressed concern about the high vacancy rate at many duty stations, in particular the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and pointed out, in that connection, that the problem could not be solved through redeploying staff or ensuring their mobility because all duty stations were facing the same problem of vacant posts.

22. He drew attention to the need for official confirmation from the Secretariat concerning its compliance with the arrangements referred to in General Assembly resolution 53/208 A, paragraph 10, concerning the two holidays of Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha in the United Nations system as a whole.

23. The recommendations of the Committee on Conferences concerning the late issuance of documents were very welcome; his delegation hoped that they would help to resolve that problem.

24. His delegation welcomed the conclusions of the Committee on Conferences relating to remote interpretation. It considered that remote interpretation should be used within strict limits once its value had been demonstrated and that it should only be used for international conferences after the General Assembly had adopted a resolution to that effect.

25. He was concerned at the increasing disparity between the use of the six official languages of the United Nations on the Organization's web site and agreed with the statement in the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/AC.198/2001/8) that further development of the web site in the six official languages would require additional allocations.

26. Despite the improvement in the provision of conference services to regional and other groupings, his delegation wished to place on record its concern at the continuance of the Secretariat's incorrect reading of resolution 54/248 B, paragraph 11, the provisions of which had been confirmed by resolution 55/222. In that connection, he emphasized the need to ensure interpretation services for all meetings of regional and other groupings of Member States.

27. Vacant language posts at the United Nations Office at Nairobi should be filled without delay and adequate funding should be ensured for other duty stations, in particular the United Nations Office at Vienna, which was in obvious financial difficulty.

28. He welcomed the statement in paragraph 8 of the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of recommendations regarding the United Nations Chronicle (A/56/339) that the Department of Public Information would endeavour to see how the United Nations Chronicle could be published in six languages as efficiently and effectively as possible so that the expectations of Member States could be fulfilled.

29. His delegation also welcomed the decision of the Committee on Conferences concerning the participation of observers in its work, but pointed out that conditions for the participation of observers need to be further improved.

30. His delegation endorsed in its entirety the annex to document A/56/261 concerning the views of the Arab Group on the provision of language services and considered that all the points raised in the document should be addressed. In particular, he said that all ESCWA documents should be translated into Arabic, that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/222, section III, paragraph 5, documents should not be made available on the United Nations web site before they were issued in traditional form in accordance with the six-week rule, and that there should be a return to the practice of issuing all United Nations documents and supplements in the six official languages. His delegation was concerned that the Secretariat had ceased its practice of issuing all documents of the main deliberative organs of the United Nations in the six official languages and called for the former practice to be restored. The Secretariat should respect the provisions of rules 78 and 120 of the

rules of procedure of the General Assembly which specified clearly that no resolution or decision should be adopted unless it had been circulated to delegations in the six official languages 24 hours previously. There was also a need to comply with rule 54 of the rules of procedure, which required verbatim and summary records to be drawn up as soon as possible in the languages of the General Assembly. His delegation pointed out in that connection that there had been considerable delay in the issuance of summary records during the previous session of the Assembly. He also drew attention to the failure to comply with rule 59, which specified that resolutions adopted by the General Assembly should be communicated to Members of the Organization within 15 days after the close of the session. Lastly, the posts of revisers in the translation services should be retained. The collections of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library should be enriched by the addition of more reference works in the Arabic language and Arabic language specialists should be appointed to work in the Library services.

31. *Mr. Effah-Apenteng (Ghana) took the Chair.*

32. **Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He noted with satisfaction that the 2000 utilization factor for the four main United Nations offices overall and for the majority of the bodies in the sample reviewed by the Committee on Conferences had exceeded 80 per cent of available conference-servicing resources. The Secretariat was to be commended on its efforts in that regard. While those efforts must continue, there was a need to ensure that the smooth functioning of intergovernmental bodies was not adversely affected. His delegation had taken note of the assurance given by the Under-Secretary-General in his introductory statement that the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services would take into account the needs of small and medium-sized delegations, whose members often had to carry out several tasks and assume several responsibilities simultaneously. The increase in the provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional groupings of Member States was also welcome.

33. The creation of a new Division of Conference Services and a permanent interpretation service at UNON had been of great benefit to non-English-speaking delegations in Nairobi. He was concerned, however, that, at the date of issuance of the relevant report, high vacancy rates had persisted in the Arabic and English booths at UNON. He would like to know how the situation currently stood and what corrective measures had been taken.

34. His delegation supported the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that the General Assembly should request the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to comply with the headquarters rule and to hold all their meetings at UNON, in order to increase further the utilization of the conference facilities in Nairobi. It also endorsed the recommendation that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) should continue their efforts to improve further the utilization of their conference centres.

35. His delegation was concerned about the late issuance of documentation, which was a persistent and serious problem. It attached great importance to compliance by the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services with the six-week rule, urged author departments to respect the 10-week rule and called for improved coordination in order to address the situation.

36. He welcomed the decrease in the overall vacancy rate for language services, but was concerned about the persistence of excessive vacancy rates at some duty stations, particularly UNON and the United Nations Office at Vienna. He therefore supported the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that priority should be given in recruitment to filling the vacancies at those Offices. He shared the concern of the Committee on Conferences that several candidates successful in competitive language examinations had refused offers of employment made by the Organization. There was a need to reflect on the causes of that situation and on ways of addressing it. The in-house training programme for interpreters might be one solution.

37. **Mr. Chen** (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services) expressed appreciation to delegations for the serious consideration they had given to the item and the issues they had raised for consideration and action by the Department. He was committed to ensuring that the

Department continued to serve the United Nations and Member States with maximum cost effectiveness.

38. Regarding the vacancy situation in the Arabic booth of the Interpretation Section at UNON, he said that priority had been given to filling those vacancies when offers of employment had been made to candidates who had passed the competitive examination for Arabic interpreters held in January 2001. Regrettably, all candidates had rejected the offers. In the immediate future, Arabic interpretation would continue to be provided through the recruitment of freelance staff, but the Department would continue to seek to fill the vacancies. He drew attention, in that connection, to paragraph 9 of the report of the Secretary-General on excessive vacancy rates in language services at some duty stations and issues relating to the recruitment of language staff (A/56/277), which described the extensive efforts made to fill those vacancies over the past year and a half. As to the English booth at UNON, its full contingent of three interpreters would be in place by early 2002: two candidates who had passed the competitive examination for English interpreters held in January 2001 had accepted career appointments at UNON beginning in December 2001 and January 2002, while a third interpreter from the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) had been given a one-year assignment to Nairobi starting in February 2002.

39. With respect to the status of the report requested by the General Assembly in resolution 55/222, section II, paragraph 15, he said that an evaluation of the existing conference facilities at UNON was being carried out in the context of an overall review of the needs of and facilities at UNON and other agencies in Nairobi. The review would take into account the experience gained as a result of the establishment of a permanent interpretation service in Nairobi and the other recent developments referred to in the relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/56/133). The report requested by the Assembly was expected to be submitted to the Fifth Committee in early 2002.

40. The quality of interpretation and translation had always been a priority of his Department. All language staff were recruited through rigorous competitive examinations and their performance was closely monitored throughout their careers. External studies programmes were available to both translators and interpreters. Translators received intensive in-house training after recruitment and special coaching before they became self-revisers. The work of revisers and self-revisers was monitored through quality control mechanisms, which also ensured the quality of translations of particularly important or sensitive documents. Interpreters took part in in-house training workshops when time and resources permitted. Occasional lapses in quality were usually due to highly technical subject matter, time constraints or human error. Specific complaints from delegations were always addressed immediately and discussed with the staff concerned.

41. The number and cost of freelance staff in the language services varied from year to year depending on the additional capacity needed at any given time. One advantage of freelance staff was that they could be recruited in a targeted fashion for specific periods. In 2000, 143 freelance interpreters had been recruited. The standard yearly cost of a staff interpreter ranged from $134,600 at the P-3 level to $192,100 at the P-5 level, while the yearly cost of continuous employment of a freelance interpreter ranged from $95,000 to $143,000 for locally recruited staff and from $155,000 to $203,000 for non-locally recruited staff.

42. The lack of a Chinese editor in the Publishing Service at the United Nations Office at Geneva was a genuine problem that had been addressed thus far through temporary assistance or assistance from the Chinese Section of the Office's Language Service. The Department would find a more durable solution in the coming biennium through redeployment.

43. Resources for temporary assistance for meetings were managed at the departmental level and allocated as needed. For example, in 2000, the amounts allocated for temporary assistance in the translation services had been $398,000 for the Arabic Service, $259,000 for the Chinese Service, $887,000 for the English Service, $607,000 for the French Service, $453,000 for the Russian Service and $595,000 for the Spanish Service. There was no fixed distribution formula, and the amounts allocated varied from year to year. That flexibility enabled the Department to respond to adjustments in the calendar of meetings.

44. The Secretariat scheduled United Nations conferences and meetings in full compliance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 53/208 A on the designation of two Muslim holidays as official holidays of the Organization. In addition, all official documents were issued simultaneously in the six

official languages, in compliance with General Assembly resolution 55/222. He had taken note of the comments and concerns of members with respect to matters such as the timely issuance of documentation, the servicing of meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States, the limitation of meeting duration, workload standards, the need for further technological innovation and the improvement of cost-effectiveness in conference services. Further details on those and other issues would be provided in the informal consultations.

Other matters

45. **The Chairman** recalled that, at the Committee's preceding meeting, the representative of Egypt had made a proposal intended to address the concerns of some delegations regarding the fact that the Committee had not held a general discussion on the different sections of the proposed programme budget for 2002-2003 at its formal meetings. The Bureau's view was that, since no objection had been raised when the Chairman had declared the general debate on the agenda item concluded, it would not be possible to reopen it to allow for the discussion of the proposed programme budget section by section. In response to the proposal put forward by the representative of Egypt, the Bureau had decided that, following the conclusion of the Committee's discussion of each part of the proposed programme budget in the informal consultations, a summary of the issues and concerns raised would be prepared by the Secretariat for reference purposes only. Those summaries would not be subject to discussion in the informal consultations.

46. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group would have liked to continue the Committee's previous practice of holding a general discussion on the proposed programme budget, followed by a section-by-section discussion, at its formal meetings; that practice had ensured transparency and had enabled delegations to place their views on record. At the current session, an acceptable solution might be to have a summary prepared of the discussions held on the different budget sections in the informal consultations and to request the heads of the departments and offices concerned to be present at those consultations during the discussions on the relevant sections. In the past, heads of departments and offices had been available to provide clarifications during the Committee's informal consultations.

47. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, regrettably, the creative approach suggested by the Bureau deviated from the Committee's established procedures. For example, the introductory statement by the Secretary-General did not normally constitute an introduction to all the sections of the proposed programme budget. The head of each department or office should introduce the relevant budget section and explain the budgetary requirements in detail, as in the past. The Group of 77 and China had made its proposal on the understanding that the discussion of the individual budget sections in informal consultations was an exceptional practice. There was no reason why the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) should have greater privileges than the Fifth Committee, yet the former had benefited from the presence of the heads of departments and offices to introduce and explain the relevant budget sections. The Fifth Committee should either proceed as proposed by the Group of 77 and China or have the heads of the departments and offices concerned introduce each section of the proposed programme budget at formal meetings, without holding a general debate.

48. **Mr. Tilemans** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that he had full confidence in the leadership of the Chairman and the Fifth Committee secretariat. The pressure under which the Committee was currently operating was explained in part by the exceptional and tragic circumstances in which the current session was taking place, which had necessitated major changes in the programme of work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees. He would like to know the cost, in terms of both human and financial resources, of the preparation of summaries of the informal consultations on each budget section. He also asked for clarification of the procedures and legal issues concerning the invitation of department heads to introduce the relevant budget sections in the informal consultations.

49. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) said that he, too, would like information on the financial and legal implications of the proposal under consideration. In the past, the Secretary-General had usually been represented at the Committee's meetings by officials from the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts. At the current session, the Secretary-General had made an introductory statement covering all sections of the

proposed programme budget and had heard the statements made on behalf of the regional groups. His delegation did not wish to question how the Secretary-General chose to introduce the budget document.

50. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that he shared the views expressed by the representatives of Belgium and Canada. The Bureau's suggestion would enable all Member States to engage fully in the discussions on the proposed programme budget and to have their questions answered. The Secretary-General had acted in accordance with previous practice in introducing the budget document and all delegations had had an opportunity to raise questions in that regard.

51. **Mr. Elgammal** (Egypt) said that it had become standard practice for the Committee to call on any programme managers or heads of departments to reply to questions posed by members about the work of their units. He was somewhat surprised that some Committee members now considered that responsibility for explaining the entire programme budget could be assigned to just one or two persons speaking on behalf of the entire Secretariat.

52. It was not constructive to raise the issue of the estimated cost of the production of short summaries of informal consultations. If the Committee wished to find out about past practices, it would be easy enough to consult the official summary records of the sessions in question to ascertain what procedures had been used during the adoption of the programme budget. However, in the present exceptional circumstances, it would be most useful to follow the procedure proposed by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

53. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said it was his recollection that the various directors had each presented to the Committee their own parts of the programme budget at formal meetings when the Committee had considered the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001. The fact that those sections had each been prepared as fascicles emphasized the importance of having each director present when the Committee took up the corresponding section.

54. While the General Assembly was indeed meeting in exceptional circumstances, that did not mean that there were such direct repercussions on the work of the Fifth Committee that it should change its practices. It would be unwise to adopt a budget without having the necessary information. In his view, the proposal put forward by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran was worthy of support. The programme budget should be considered in informal consultations, in the presence of the corresponding directors or heads of departments and a representative of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), and summary records should be prepared. Alternatively, each programme would have to be introduced officially.

55. **Mr. Fox** (Australia) said that his delegation, like those of Canada, the European Union and the United States, believed that the Secretary-General had introduced the entire programme budget when he had appeared before the Fifth Committee, not just the foreword or introduction. He expressed doubt as to the advisability, procedural acceptability and cost of having informal consultations covered by summary records, even on an exceptional basis, and expressed support for the procedures adopted by the Chairman and the Bureau for the adoption of the programme budget.

56. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) assured the Committee that the Secretary-General understood the importance of ensuring that heads of departments and directors of programmes took part in the budget process. Every effort was made to ensure that they were present during the deliberations of the Advisory Committee and CPC, the reports of which were submitted to the Fifth Committee. For as long as he could remember, the Secretary-General had been the one to introduce the programme budget as a whole formally to the Fifth Committee, which then deliberated on a section-by-section basis. The introductions by the directors had been limited to question and answer sessions during the informal consultations, and were given only as needed and when such directors were invited by the Committee. In any event, the Secretary-General reserved the right to designate his representatives at any meetings on agenda items.

57. As for the cost of issuing summaries of informal consultations, there were two possible scenarios. The first would involve the production by the Secretariat of an unofficial summary at the end of the informal consultations, and could be implemented without any direct additional costs, since the Secretariat in any event kept notes of the informal consultations in the course of its work. On the other hand, the production of official summary records would be costly, as it would be necessary to engage précis-writers and translators. It

would also undermine the informal nature of the consultations.

58. **Mr. Albrecht** (South Africa) said that it was part of his responsibility, as his Government's representative in the Fifth Committee, to report faithfully on both the formal and the informal proceedings. He did not consider it useful to request that further official records should be produced by the Secretariat. The Secretariat had been very forthcoming in providing information to the Committee and in ensuring access to directors and heads of departments when so requested. It was indeed an exceptional year, and the Committee must work under extra time constraints because of the imminent arrival of Heads of State and Government. The Committee's priority must be to conclude the budget discussions as quickly as possible.

59. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation's request that programme directors and heads of departments should attend the Committee's deliberations should in no way be interpreted as an attempt to minimize the role of the Secretary-General in introducing the programme budget.

60. **The Chairman** suggested that the Committee should continue with the informal consultations on the understanding that representatives from the various departments would be present during the appropriate discussions. Brief unofficial summaries of the issues and concerns raised would be drawn up by the Secretariat following the discussion of each part of the budget.

61. *It was so decided.*

62. **The Chairman** said that he had received communications from the President of the United Nations Staff Union and the President of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) requesting access to address the Fifth Committee under agenda items 126 (Human resources management) and 127 (United Nations common system). He took it that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/213 and in keeping with the Committee's practice at previous sessions of the General Assembly, the Committee wished to invite those staff representatives to make oral statements in connection with agenda items 126 and 127.

63. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.